Social Media

This chapter will help you understand social media and how to work it into your communications activities. Sidebar information and a full glossary define and explain commonly used social media terms.

Section I. What Is Social Media?

Social media describes online tools used to share and publish opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives and include blogs, message boards, podcasts, wiki sites, and vlogs. Messages can be delivered via text, images, audio, and video. Social media tools also allow users to respond to what they have read, listened to, or watched by posting comments that all other readers can see.

These days, almost everyone has access to the Web, either at work, at home, or on the go through a mobile device. Even though low-income individuals or families may not have easy access to a computer, many increasingly connect to the Web through their mobile phones. Since the Web and social media tools are so accessible to the public, it is important to understand how to use these tools to reach your audience(s).

How is social media different from traditional forms of media?

Traditional communications such as television, newspaper, and radio go one way, from the producer to a general audience. See the comparison with social media below.

Traditional Media	*Social Media*
Publisher or broadcaster is in control	Audience is in control
One way communication— no conversation	Two-way communication— open dialogue
Organization creates the content	Users can create or help generate content

Is social media and social marketing the same?

Social marketing is an approach to communicating that builds awareness about a social issue and works to change people's behaviors or attitudes and to improve the lives of individuals and communities. Examples include programs to raise money for charity or to increase awareness of a health issue. Social media can be used as part of a social marketing program—for example, an organizational Facebook page that helps promote a fundraising event. However, social marketing does not imply the use of social media.

Social Media Glossary A—E

Application or app
A small program downloaded and run on a computer desktop, mobile device, or social network that is designed to help the user perform a specific task.

Blog (also Web log)
A journal-style Web site on which an individual or group enters text, called a "post," resulting in a running conversation displayed in reverse chronological order.

Consumer-generated content
Digital content that is produced by self-publishers and sometimes picked up or referenced in traditional media.

Digital communications
Myriad of outbound communications tactics that leverage digital technology to deliver messages: email, video, text messaging, online advertising, optimized press releases, podcasts, videos, etc.

Digital news room (also online pressroom)
A robust source of news and media content such as news releases, contacts, background information, and digital media assets including photos, graphics, audio, video, and multimedia content. Often incorporated into an organization's Web site.

Email marketing
A form of direct marketing that uses emails to deliver a message and promote a service or product to your target audience.

What are the benefits and limitations of using social media?

Engaging the public and/or media brings both benefits and limitations. With social media, it's important to understand that these tools are powered by people; as a result, the tools require time and energy to manage (remember, this is a two-way conversation). However, the time invested will help form a relationship between SNAP and your audience and create a deeper connection with the community you serve.

Benefits and limitations of social media can be summarized as follows:

Benefits	*Challenges*
Open connections and receive feedback from the communities you serve	Takes time to manage—to learn and develop relationships
Low cost; many tools are free	Not always "on message"—can sometimes be too informal
Flexible and fun—help to generate new ideas	Uncontrolled—you may receive negative feedback
Allow for creativity and experimentation	Takes time to refresh content
Increase likelihood your site will be found in search engines	Can lead to information overload

What are some social media trends?

Social media is popular because it helps people find and connect with each other in new and easy ways. With social media, you can connect virtually with people all around the world who share the same goals, face the same issues, and experience the same challenges.

People are increasingly using search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, or Bing to find what they need, when they need it. It's important that your information appear on the first page of search results; a first-page landing, particularly on Google, can carry a similar prestige and visibility to being mentioned on the front page of The New York Times.

How do you get on the first page? The more links you have to your Web site from other well-trafficked sites, the more credible your Web site is and the higher your search engine rank or position will be.

Social Media Glossary F—P

Facebook
A popular global social network where individuals may publish and maintain profiles and connect with other users. Businesses, organizations, and ideas may also publish and maintain special profiles.

Influencer
An active and well-connected individual online. Usually, these individuals have large followings and reach a lot of people, but they can also be highly influential in molding the views of a specific audience or group of audiences you want to reach.

Microblogging
A form of online publishing that allows users to send very brief text updates and messages to a network of subscribers. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, email, or the Web. Twitter is an example.

Mobile marketing
A form of marketing and communicating through cell phones and mobile devices. Can be used to deliver text messages, email, or applications to download.

Online monitoring
Tracking of online coverage and conversation, usually for reporting or responding purposes.

Podcast
Audio recording that is hosted on a Web page and accessible for individual downloads.

Tips & Tools

Adding social media tools to your SNAP outreach program will create more links back to your site. When your link shows up on a search engine's front page, you're much more likely to drive visitors to your content and create opportunities for dialogue.

Important Do's and Don'ts For Using Social Media

DO:

- Define your goals. Always think first before starting to use social media. Be sure that using the tool will help you to achieve the results that you want.

- Participate actively. Contribute constructive comments and updates. You will gain trust and others will appreciate you.

- Be flexible. Social media tools are often upgraded, so stay flexible and up-to-date on what's current.

- Be yourself! Social media allow us to show our personalities—in fact, doing so is welcomed and appreciated.

- Provide value. Carefully consider everything you publish. How does this help the people that your organization serves? If you discover that it is not helpful, try to find a way to improve it.

- Keep a consistent voice. If you are using more than one social media tool or channel, be consistent to maintain the same tone and personality.

- Create a response plan. It is very important to respond as quickly as possible. If you do not, the conversation can die or others will drop it out of boredom. However, it is vital to be prepared. Develop a plan to prepare for negative situations that may affect your organization online, and include suggested guidance for responding.

DON'T:

- Forget that social media is powered by real people. Be yourself and avoid sounding overly scripted.

- Ignore your community. If your organization has a page or group in a social network, be sure to keep the content fresh. Respond to people quickly if they reach out to you.

- Lose track of the real world. Social media tools might be great, but nothing will ever come close to live interaction with real people.

- Forget to monitor. Keeping track of news about your organization and issue will allow you to provide more relevant content and information to the people who need it most.

- Spam! Be sure that updates and messages to others online are relevant and timely. If they are not, you may lose trust if those on the receiving end consider them spam.

- Try to do too much too fast. Remember, every organization is different. Choose the tools that make the most sense for your organization. With time, and after evaluating what is likely to be effective and practical, more tools can be folded into the mix.

- Engage in dishonest behavior online. Do not lie, scam, or plagiarize other content that you find online. If you would like to use a sentence of two of someone else's blog post in a Twitter update or on your organization's blog, be sure to cite the reference with a link.

Section II. Organizations and Social Media

Why should organizations use social media tools to promote SNAP?

Social media tools provide everyday people with a platform to share ideas and opinions—in short, everyone who wants to say something can now be heard.

A quick online search shows why it's important for organizations to embrace social media. A Google search for "food stamps" gets thousands of results. People are searching and commenting about SNAP with or without your input. Helping them locate local, credible SNAP information means you need to show up in their search results. Using social media tools allows you to create conversations as well as locate and join existing ones.

Can you commit to social media success?

Your organization may not be ready to use social media if you're unable to commit to the following guiding principles ... and that's OK. The most important thing to do now is to think about how social media might help now or in the future.

Section III. Social Media Strategy

How do you create a social media strategy?

As with public relations or marketing, it's important to develop a strategy before using social media tools. Ask the following questions to get started:

- Who is my audience?
- How do they access the Internet? From home, the library, or mobile?
- Do they use social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter?
- What are they interested in learning more about?
- How can we help them make more informed decisions?
- Am I willing to have an open dialogue and risk negative feedback?
- Am I able to respond quickly to maintain the dialogue?
- How can I set up my social media platforms in a way that will allow the most effective use of our own time?
- Are other organizations in my community using social media? How can we partner and work together?

Asking these questions in advance will not only keep you focused and organized, but also will ensure that you are spending your resources wisely.

 Tips & Tools

Guiding Principles for Social Media Success
- Provide value to audiences with helpful, interesting, relevant, and timely information.
- Create two-way communication.
- Select the best channels for reaching the target audience based on where conversations are already happening.
- Support the organization's mission with social media activities that make the most sense for the organization and audience.
- Make it a priority across the organization and not just for one person or group.
- Give all your social media channels a consistent voice and look.

The following are additional points and examples to consider when using social media:

The best way to get started is to look at ways other community organizations use social media, while also understanding the challenges they may face.

In Arizona, a Nutrition Network Program Manager uses the agency's Web site as the primary hub for information. The Web site includes a monthly newsletter, tips for parents, and recipes. The manager is planning to use Twitter to share recipes. In the future, the agency plans to use Facebook as a place to host conversations about nutrition education and to provide a forum for its partners. While this particular nutritionist sees the value of social media, she is also concerned about negative comments and Facebook wall posts.

In Oregon, the Nutrition Education Program Coordinator used Facebook on a trial basis to support a specific campaign, and based on that success plans to take the program statewide. Her main reason for using social media is to connect program participants with one another and with program staff. Her biggest hurdle is identifying staff who have enough time to take on this project.

Social Media Glossary R—S

RSS
Acronym for Really Simple Syndication. RSS "readers" allow Web users to easily "feed out" or "pull in," by way of subscription, selected Web content to or from another Web property.

RSS reader
Also called a news aggregator; allows users to electronically capture and display in a central location information and content from a variety of online media outlets, including e-zines, Web sites, and blogs using RSS feeds. Example: Google Reader.

Social bookmarking
A popular method of classifying, sharing, and storing electronic content to facilitate easy sorting or search. The bookmarks, or tags, help users identify relevant content as well as rank content based on the number of viewers, relevance, etc. Example: Delicious.

Social media
Online tools used to share and publish opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives; include blogs, message boards, podcasts, wiki sites, and vlogs. Messages can be delivered via text, images, audio, and video. Social media tools also allow readers to respond to what they have read, listened to, or watched by posting comments that all other readers can see.

Social media news release (SMNR)
Also new media release or social media press release. Traditional press release content that is repurposed for optimal online visibility in Web search and encourages Web-user interaction. Key messages are "chunked" into shorter bits and include text links to relevant content, tags (keywords), multimedia, and other assets that encourage user dialogue and content sharing.

Social networking site (also social network)
Web site featuring focused, often user-generated content of interest to site visitors who openly converse; includes personal profiles, blogs, discussion groups, photos, music, and videos. Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn.

When you are ready to start planning your social media program, consider the following:

Audience

As with any marketing effort, the first step is to identify the audiences you need to reach and how they use social media. If you are considering a Facebook profile, search to see if anyone is talking about your organization or issue on Facebook and identify those groups or individuals before you set up an organizational presence. You will need a Facebook account to do this. If you don't have one, you can assign a staff member to set one up.

If you are considering a blog, find out who the key bloggers are in your subject area. You can do this by doing a Google blog search (http://www.google.com/blogsearch). This will allow you to observe what your audience is saying, and will help you plan for content down the road. It is also helpful to see how other organizations like yours use social media.

Objectives

Be specific and think about what you want to accomplish:

- Increase awareness about SNAP?

- Encourage consumers who are not participating in SNAP to use the prescreening tool?

- Share low-cost, healthy recipes with SNAP participants?

Setting a social media objective is not about blasting your message out to a mass audience. It is about reaching out to targeted influential audience members, developing relationships, and having a conversation.

Staff Roles

Who is going to implement your social media strategy within your organization? Whether you hire someone new or assign the role to a current staff member or volunteer, that person should be comfortable using the tools, be passionate about your organization's programs, and should enjoy interacting with other people.

Policy

Social media requires a mix of authenticity, openness, and transparency, making it important to have an upfront understanding of what your staff will and will not do with social media tools. The process of creating a policy can also lead to a deeper understanding of the benefits and value of social media. The policy you set up should be written down and should be prepared with the advice of your organization's legal counsel.

This policy will need to include guidelines and procedures on a number of issues.

Tips & Tools

If your organization will be setting up profiles on social networking sites, you will need guidelines to address how staff members identify themselves as members of your organization. In addition, the policy will need to cover guidelines for responding to negative comments on a blog or online forum, including what your organization will do when a fan or a critic sets up a page on Facebook that misrepresents your message, logo, or anything else affiliated with your brand, including pictures and videos.

Time Commitments

A social media program requires an investment in time more than maintenance, especially if you are learning as you go. But as you become more familiar with the tool and the workflow, it will be less time-consuming.

It is crucial to maintain any conversation that you start, and to respond quickly to comments from others. Letting a conversation lag or lapse will cause visitors to leave, and some may not return. Your social media plan needs ongoing, consistent monitoring.

Section IV. Social Media Tactics and Tools

Below here is a list of helpful media and Web sites so you can stay current on new tools and technology.

As new tools arrive and old tools are updated frequently, it's important to stay current on what's new in social media. Some helpful Web sites and recommended blogs to read regularly include:

- **Mashable**: Updated throughout the day, Mashable (http://www. mashable.com) is the Web's leading resource on social media news and tools.

- **Read Write Web**: Another resource for news and tools, Read Write Web (http://www.readwriteweb.com) also provides helpful tips on how to use social media.

- **Beth's Blog**: Written by nonprofit social media guru Beth Kanter, Beth's Blog (http://beth.typepad.com) is written especially for nonprofits to learn how to use social media.

- **Word of Mouth Marketing Association**: An organization for agencies and companies that regularly work in the social media space, WOMMA (http://www.womma.org) provides readers and members with helpful news and tips, in addition to a code of ethics for communications and marketing professionals on how to connect with their audiences through social media.

- **Marketing Profs Daily Fix Blog**: A group blog written by many well-known social media experts, the Daily Fix (http://www.mpdailyfix. com) blog provides helpful examples of how companies and organizations successfully use social media.

- **Social Media Monitoring Tools**: The following are easy-to-use sites and tools for real-time social media search, analysis, and, in some cases, email alerts.) http://www.socialmention.com; http://www.howsociable.com)

- **Social Media Policies Wiki**: A helpful collection of sample social media policies from a wide range of organizations and companies (wiki. altimetergroup.com).

Social Media Glossary T—Z

Tags
Keywords or phrases assigned to Web content, such as blog posts, wiki entries, photos, podcasts, etc., to facilitate easy organization, called indexing and searching.

Twitter
Free social networking and microblogging service that allows users to send and read other users' updates (tweets), which are text-based posts of up to 140 characters. Updates are displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have signed up to receive them.

Virtual world
Computer-based, simulated environment in which users access a downloadable program that lets them interact with one other via avatars, i.e., two- or three-dimensional graphical representations of real-world life forms. Example: Second Life.

Vlog
A blog consisting of video posts, accessible for individual downloads using "pull" technology such as RSS feeds and video-capable MP3 players.

Web 2.0
A term coined to loosely describe Web-based services such as blogs, wiki sites, and social networks that emphasize online collaboration and content-sharing among users.

Widget
A "mini-Web page" or a piece of content that you can "snag" and then embed in various personal Web sites. Distribution usually includes tools that allow users to easily port or grab code to embed the widget across their own sites and social network profiles. For example, a widget could be a graphical display of your most recent tweets on Twitter or of your Facebook fans and posts. Widgets are typically embedded in the sidebar of blogs.

Wiki
A Web environment that allows visitors to openly edit the content, used primarily for collaborative content development and publishing. Example: Wikipedia.

What are social media outreach tactics?

Like public relations or marketing, many channels and tactics can be used to deliver messages via social media. Social media programs always begin with listening. What is your audience saying? What does it need and how can you help? The main tactics for executing a social media strategy are listening, participating, sharing your story, creating community, and generating online coverage. The following describes several tactics, along with tools to achieve them.

Listening

These tools help you find conversations that are important to your organization and issues, good or bad. They help you determine who is talking about you and how you can best respond.

- **Google Alerts**: Google Alerts (http://www.google.com/alerts) are email updates of the latest relevant Google results from news sites and blogs based on a search term or topic. You can subscribe through email and Really Simple Syndication (RSS). RSS allows you to "pull in" relevant content via a subscription service. Google Alerts help you monitor a news story or issue, keep current with your industry, and track who is writing about you and your organization.

- **Technorati**: Technorati (http://www.technorati.com) is a search engine just for blogs. Technorati tracks "blog reactions" or links to blogs. Search for your organization or issue on Technorati, and subscribe to RSS alerts—that way, when someone blogs about your program, you will know about it.

- **Twitter Search**: Twitter is a social network, specifically known as microblogging. This form of online publishing allows you to send very brief updates and messages (maximum 140 characters) to a network of subscribers. Twitter conversations happen fast, and the easiest way to track them is to use the Twitter search field (http://www.search.twitter.com) to locate instances where your organization is mentioned. You can also use http://www.tweetdeck.com or http://www.hootsuite.com to monitor Twitter users and keywords.

- **RSS Reader**: Also called a news aggregator, this allows you to capture relevant copy efficiently and in one place to read when you can. Rather than visiting 20 different blogs every morning, you can have all new posts delivered straight to your RSS reader. Bloglines, Google Reader, and NetVibes are popular RSS readers; review a few and use the reader you like best.

[1]Google Reader

Participating on Twitter and Blogs

Listening will naturally lead to joining the conversation.

- **Twitter**: Once you've listened a while on Twitter, it is time to join and engage! First, you will need to set up your account. The social media blog Mashable has a great step-by-step guide on how to get started and use Twitter: http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter. Remember, having a Twitter presence requires making a commitment. If you are unsure of the time and resources, remain in listening mode until you are ready. You can always address questions and concerns you discover on Twitter on other platforms, such as directly through the email provided on the user's Web site, through a blog, or on Facebook.

[2] New York City Food Bank Twitter Page

- **Comment on blogs**: If you are using Google News Alerts, chances are you will receive an alert to a post or story that directly names your organization. In situations where you want to respond, it's important to know when to comment and when not to engage with an online response.

  If a blog post or comment is negative, think about your response before answering. Ask yourself, "Will my comment help solve the problem? Will my comment help improve my organization's relationship with this individual?" If the answers are yes, proceed with the comment, especially if you are responding to inaccurate information in the blog post. If not, reconsider your approach based on expected outcome and whether the blog is widely read by your audience.

  Whether responding to a positive or a negative post, be sure to identify who you are and who you work for. Include a link to your organization's Web site or blog, if you have one. This is called transparency, and it is very important as you represent your organization both online and offline.

Sharing Your Story

The next step is to *share* your story using social media. You can do this through blogging, podcasting, sharing photos on Flickr or videos on YouTube, or any number of other social media tools. It is very important for you to determine which tool or combination of tools is the best fit for your organization. The challenging part of sharing your story, though, is getting viewers, readers, and listeners to pass along your story to others!

- **Blogs**: Blogs are a great way to quickly and easily publish and share your organization's most recent news and updates all in one convenient location.

    Requirements:

    - Time commitment

    - Editorial calendar: a plan for content month-by-month based on topics, seasons, and issues or questions of interest to your audience

    - Available resources: technical, content, and staffing

³ USDA Blog

- **Flickr**: Flickr is a popular photo-sharing site that allows you to upload, store, organize, and share images with everyone or just a group. You could use Flickr to share photos of a recent SNAP event, seminar, or important meeting. Additionally, you may also create photo pools in Flickr, which allow you to invite members of a Flickr group to contribute images to the pool. This can be especially helpful if a large group is contributing content for a campaign, program, or event.

Tips & Tools

How to Approach Social Media
Social media is not "one size fits all." Each organization's approach will be different because every organization has different needs, missions, resources, and culture.

Tips & Tools

Always ask for permission before posting photos of people online, and follow your organization's policy in the event signed permission forms are needed.
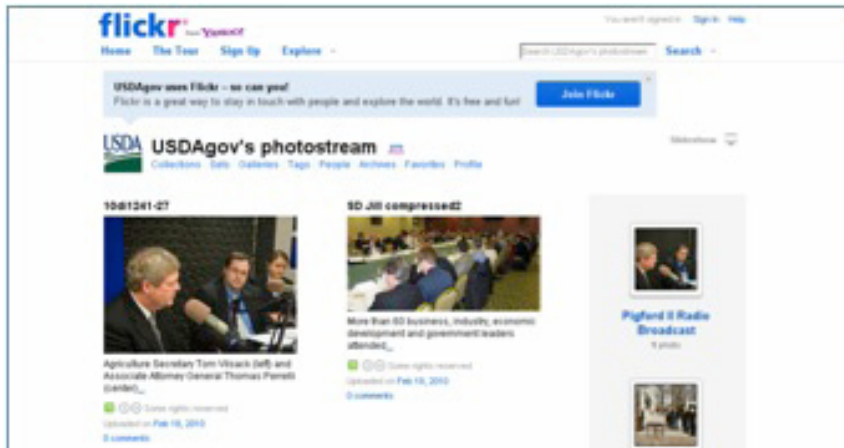
[4] USDA Flickr Page

- **YouTube**: With YouTube, you can create an online channel to post and share your organization's videos. YouTube also has a helpful guide designed especially for nonprofits (http://www.youtube.com/t/ngo_tips). Try recording an interview with your colleagues or post a short video highlight of an event. Once you post the video, let people know it's there through other communications channels. Partner with like-minded groups by subscribing to their YouTube channels and encourage them to subscribe to yours. Be sure to tag your videos appropriately and accurately so viewers are able to find them when they are searching. And again, be sure to keep privacy in mind and get permission before posting.

[5] Feeding America YouTube Channel

- **Podcasts**: A podcast is an online audio recording that can be downloaded to an iPod or streamed straight from a Web site or blog. Podcasts are a great way to capture an interview of your customers or leadership that can then be distributed using social media. Podcasts can be created using software or free Web applications like http://www.blogtalkradio.com. BlogTalkRadio lets you record, broadcast, archive, and share your podcasts online.

[6] Project Bread Podcasts

- **Twitter**: For those with less time to create content but who still have a lot to say, Twitter is a great platform from which to share short updates with your audiences—including journalists, who often search Twitter to find leads, information, and resources.

[7] Capital Area Food Bank Twitter

Creating Community

Social networking tools connect people, regardless of location, and can build a community around your issue or organization. Once you have an online community, you can engage people and inspire them to take action. Many social networks provide users with personal profiles that they create and control.

To keep a community growing and engaged, it is important to keep it updated with new content and information. You may also want to ask your community members what they would like to see on the social network from your organization. Keep the content relevant and fresh, and don't be afraid to experiment. Post a video you think is entertaining and related to your issue, or share a link to a news story that relates to your issue.

Popular social networks and tools include:

- **Facebook**: Perhaps the most popular of all social networks, Facebook (http://www.facebook.com) gives organizations the opportunity to create Fan Pages or Groups where people can gather and share information. Fan Pages are most often used by brands and organizations, whereas Groups are created around events or issues. Facebook has a helpful guide for organizations on creating a Facebook Fan Page: http://www.facebook.com/facebookpages?v=box_3#!/advertising/?pages. A guide for those interested in a Facebook Group can be found here: http://www.facebook.com/help/#!/help/?page=414.


[8] USDA Facebook Fan Page

- **LinkedIn**: Used most frequently for job searching and professional networking, LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com) allows users to create profiles that display work history and experience. They can also connect to others by joining a group or connecting with employers, creating groups about issues or skills, or creating groups for like-minded professionals. For example, you could create a group for people who work in hunger prevention or advocacy.
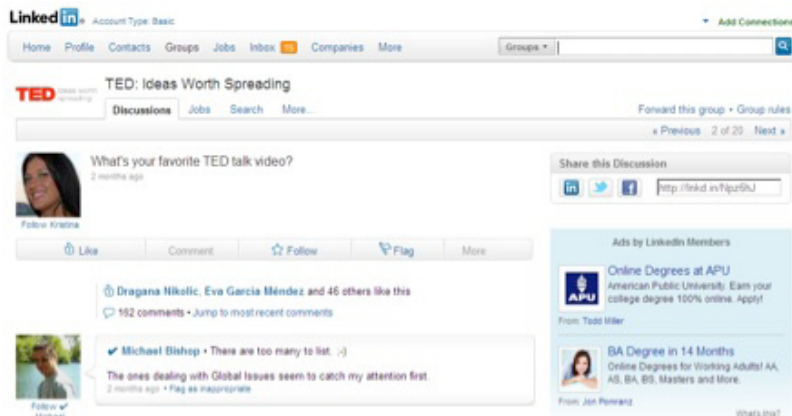
[9] LinkedIn Group Example

- **BigTent**: A free social network development program, BigTent (http://www.bigtent.com) is a tool that allows you to create your own social network for free. With the easy-to-use platform, you can create your own network around an organization, issue, or group. You can set it up so that it is open to anyone, or completely private. Members have their own profiles and can connect with others on those profiles or in group areas, such as discussion boards. When considering BigTent or any other community platform, it's important to think carefully about whether or not you need to create your own social network or use one that already exists, like Facebook. When you are conducting your needs assessment, ask your community members what they would prefer and think about how each social network option might serve them. You might also check with potential partners and determine whether presenting yourselves online as a coalition would be more beneficial.
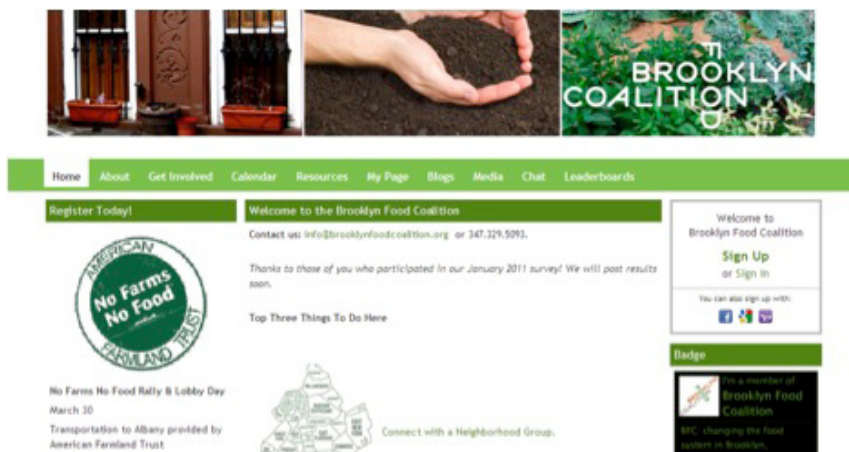
[10] Brooklyn Food Coalition Ning Profile

Generating Online Coverage

Sometimes it's not enough to share information through social media and social networks and hope that the "right" people find it. To truly engage the right audience, it might be necessary to connect directly through additional outreach.

Key to this type of outreach is the development of relationships with digital publishers and influencers; these include Web site editors, bloggers, online community leaders, and, in some cases, traditional journalists who also publish online.

Outreach to online publishers is similar to media relations, but is conducted exclusively within email. Online influencers differ from traditional media contacts in that many are not trained journalists. As a result, their needs, expectations, and approaches to content are different.

Successful online outreach relies on two things:

- **Content that is tailored and unique to each target.** Unlike traditional reporters who do their own reporting and tap their own sources, online targets are open to having most of the work done for them in advance. This gives you the opportunity to assemble your own information and deliver it more directly.

  Digital targets like content such as:

  - Pre-drafted Q&As, which they can easily post on their sites

  - Q&A via email, which they present as "interviews"

  - Video interviews and other visual content

  - Exclusive images and graphics

- **An official spokesperson or well-regarded observer (someone whose information and experiences relate to the audience).** For instance, if you want to connect with an online publisher who writes about parenting and child care, it is important to identify someone from your organization who has a connection to parenting and/or understands child care issues. This may not always be a senior-level person; just be sure that whomever you choose is comfortable communicating in this new space.

Step 1 Research

Based on your audience and content, research will help you find the right people to connect with online. A longer list isn't always better; instead, focus on finding the right targets.

Step 2 Reach Out

Once you've identified the right influencers, look for a way to get in touch. Most online outreach is conducted through email, so make sure you have correct and current email addresses. Also, be sure to look for any preferences as to how they like to be contacted or "pitched" on their Web sites. Many online publishers state their preferences or indicate "PR-friendly" status, meaning you have the green light to get in touch. Here are a few suggestions for reaching out:

- **Be brief in your email.** Explain exactly why your message is important to them and to their readers, and provide them with links to content (no attached files) and additional resources.

- **Provide contact information.** Be sure to give them your name and other pertinent contact information. Provide them with a brief description of your organization.

- **Avoid jargon.** With online outreach, there is no need to insert "buzz words" or clever language. Be yourself!

Step 3 Follow Up

After you initially email your contact list, feel free to send a follow-up note after a few days. If you don't hear back, that's okay. Your contact may be busy or think your message wasn't an exact fit for his or her readers. However, if you do hear back, be sure to provide additional information and promptly answer any questions. Finally, if your information is posted, thank them. Keep in touch if you have relevant new content.

How does social media fit into current SNAP outreach and promotional efforts?

Using social media requires strategy, planning, and integration with other communications activities. Social media can be particularly powerful when combined with traditional forms of outreach, communication, and marketing. Just be sure to consider carefully how these tools help you reach your communications goals.

- When **drafting a press release** for traditional media, make it appealing to bloggers and online publishers by adding social media-friendly and shareable content, such as links to videos and images relating to the release. For example, see how the software company Cisco incorporates social media content into its press releases and announcements: http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/index.html

- When **scanning newspapers for coverage** about your issue or organization, use Google or another search engine, like Yahoo! or Bing, to find blogs and Web sites that are also writing about your issue and/or organization. Google provides some good tips here: http://www.google.com/support/websearch/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=134479

Tips & Tools

Think of social media as ingredients that can be added to the larger mix of communication activities that you already carry out (e.g., distributing press releases, sending a newsletter to your partners and customers, pitching television or newspaper reporters, etc.).

- When **pitching TV or newspaper reporters** about your organization's programs, consider adding a relevant local blogger to your list. Try typing the name of your city into a search engine along with the word "blog" to see what comes up. For example, a search for "Kansas City blog" produces a number of potential bloggers to connect with in the Kansas City area. Just be sure to read each blog very carefully to determine whether the blogger will be interested in your content and in your organization. Once you find a blog that you think would appreciate your information, scan the blog again to see who the blogger reads and who the blogger links to, as this may provide additional local bloggers for you to consider in your outreach.

- If you regularly **send partners and customers newsletters or announcements** through the mail, consider how you can extend the reach of your content by sending that information through email, Twitter, or a blog. Also, consider adding the Web site address for the social media platforms you use to the direct mail you send as a way to drive traffic to your online destinations.

Section V. Social Media Monitoring and Measurement

How to measure the success of social media efforts?

How can you tell if it is worth it? A measurement process can help you track the results of your efforts to communicate hard and soft data. By mixing these two types of measurements, you will see what is and is not working within your social media strategy. You also will be able to discover trends, new influencers in your community, and different channels and places online to connect with those you serve. Here are some examples of hard and soft data:

Hard Data	*Soft Data*
Number of newsletter subscribers	Engagement and interaction with those you serve
Number of followers on Twitter or fans on Facebook	Reputation
Staff time saved by using social media	Loyalty
Cost savings from using social media	Satisfaction
Donations	Sentiment—positive or negative feedback in media coverage
Increased rank in Google and Yahoo! search engine results	Feedback from those you serve
Increased coverage in newspapers, TV news, and online	

Now that you know what kind of information to look for, you need to learn how to find it and where to look. There are a number of free online tools that can help you identify these data quickly and easily; a few examples of these tools are included at the end of this chapter.

Keep in mind that since these tools are free, they are not always 100 percent accurate. This is especially true if they try to determine whether a piece of content is positive or negative. These free tools are great for quick data collection, but be sure to experiment and find the tool that works best for your needs.

How do I showcase and communicate our social media success?

Once you have the measurement metrics in place, use them to tell the story of your social media strategy. One way to do this is by writing a case study. Write out the challenges your organization faced before using social media, the solutions you created with social media, and then the results.

Once you have the case study, share it with your colleagues and partners to illustrate the value of social media. Doing so will not only highlight your work but also may provide you with more support to further incorporate social media tools into your organization's projects.

The following social media tools are free to use and can help measure your social media activities:

Facebook Insights: A tool to monitor engagement and influence on your Facebook page. As page administrator, you can access data about your page from the Facebook Insights dashboard. The data includes statistics such as daily and monthly active users, daily new "likes," daily interactions like comments, the geographic location of your visitors, external referrals, internal link traffic, and more.

Klout: Provides a summary of your organization's social influence by displaying a ranking that factors in your reach and impact on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Bit.ly URL Shortener: Bit.ly not only shortens your URL, but also offers analytics and click data for every link shortened.

Advanced Twitter Search: The advanced features can be used to find tweets about yourself and your organization.

YouTube Insight: Enables you to view detailed statistics about the number of views and popularity for the videos you have uploaded to YouTube. NOTE: You need to have a verified YouTube account to use this feature.

Flickr: Flickr provides metrics that enable you to see statistics such as views for your photos, sets, and galleries separated under categories such as today, yesterday, and all-time. It lets you know about your most viewed photos, and also tells you how many have received comments.

Social Mention: A free social media analysis platform that enables you to easily track and measure what others are saying about you online by monitoring more than 100 social media sites, including Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube.

Technorati.com: The leading blog search engine and directory, Technorati.com indexes more than a million blogs. Technorati.com tracks not only the authority and influence of blogs, but also the most comprehensive and current index of who and what is most popular in the Blogosphere.